

Air Force Mafia: The Bumbling Spies

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In Building 828 of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton, Ohio, there exists a hush-hush operation of spies who answer to no one but the Air Force, who spy on their fellow citizens and whose operations are so illegal and unethical that they are known privately as the Air Force Mafia.

This uncontrolled espionage network reaches into the pockets of every American, violates the constitutional rights of U.S. citizens, has adversely affected the design of U.S. weapons systems, and sometimes impedes intelligence gathering activities of duly constituted agencies, such as the Central Intelligence Agency.

Behind the doors of Building 828 are stories of ineptness, failure and conspiracy. In the name of national security these intelligence agents have the authority to threaten American citizens who get in their way.

I know, because I have been in Building 828 as Pratt & Whitney Aircraft's foreign technology expert and I have worked with this Air Force outfit, officially known as the Air Force Foreign Technology Division.

After almost three years of association with it I broke relations in 1970 because I did not wish to participate in what has been described by knowledgeable insiders as a "national intelligence scandal."

By refusing to cooperate with the Air Force Mafia, I was harassed and intimidated by its agents. An agent attempted to blackmail me, they threatened my life and enlisted others in a conspiracy which went beyond normal U.S. intelligence operations in Europe.

My company, Pratt & Whitney's Florida Research and Development Center in Palm Beach County, which is dependent on Air Force contracts, ordered me in 1971 to cooperate with the agents in Building 828 despite a written request by me in 1970 to be phased out of any further dealings with them.

I was fired in October 1971, and Pratt & Whitney employees were told I was dismissed for violating company rules. Few persons knew that I had an excellent reputation in classified circles analyzing intelligence for the Air Force and collecting intelligence for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The story behind the firing went beyond the gates of the huge Pratt & Whitney jet and rocket engine complex.

The Foreign Technology Division is under the prestigious Air Force systems Command. It is not considered a branch of the U.S. intelligence community and is not controlled by the U.S. Intelligence Board, which oversees U.S. intelligence operations.

Without controls by government bodies, ambitious leaders within the division were able to extend their power in the late 1960s, eventually overstepping the bounds of their assigned intelligence role and earning for their organization the derogatory nickname Air Force Mafia.

As Pratt & Whitney's foreign technology expert in the late 1960s and early 1970s, I had to deal with agents in Building 828 and I saw their power grow.

In a secret agreement with the State Department, the division is authorized to conduct extravagant intelligence missions using as bases U.S. embassies in most foreign capitals. In the name of national security certain intelligence agents have been granted authority to coerce, intimidate and blackmail American citizens.

U.S. embassy employees have collaborated to further intimidate Americans who have been targeted. Because of an agreement with U.S. embassies, any complaints do not reach authorities in the states.

Division agents have infiltrated American companies, research establishments, universities and other institutions in an effort to influence the conduct of research and the flow of technological intelligence. Infiltration often occurs as an outgrowth of some legitimate intelligence purpose. Once an agent establishes contact with a person who seems sympathetic to the goals of the division, the agent may ask him about secret company projects or may enlist him to spy on his colleagues or to cultivate more contacts in the company for the division.

Communications bypass official government-company channels and make use of private home addresses and secret post office box numbers.

The infiltration within Pratt & Whitney Aircraft's Florida Research and Development Center reached the point where one high-level manager was transmitting company jet engine secrets to agents who were known to be friendly with General Electric Co., Pratt & Whitney's main jet engine competitor. Yet security investigators from United Aircraft Corp., Pratt & Whitney's parent firm, failed to learn the details of the conspiracy because of a cover-up.

In an attempt to influence Air Force assessments on Russian weapons systems so that they could sway decision-makers in the Pentagon and Congress, the division once threatened to terminate relations with Pratt & Whitney unless its foreign technology expert in East Hartford, Conn., was replaced as the liaison officer with the Air Force.

The division's threat was made several weeks before the Air Force was scheduled to announce the award of a multimillion dollar jet engine contract that Pratt & Whitney was seeking.

The Directorate of Foreign Technology of the Aeronautical Systems Division of the Air Force in collaboration with the larger Foreign Technology Division in Building 828 had a private working agreement during the late 1960s with McDonnell Douglas in St. Louis. Through its foreign technology agreements with Air Force intelligence officers, McDonnell Douglas was given intelligence information on Russia's most advanced operational fighter aircraft, the MIG 25; this information was not necessarily made available to McDonnell's competitors, North American Rockwell and Fairchild-Hiller.